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SIPDIS

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TREASURY FOR CHGREWE

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SUBJECT: REFORMER MIKLOS SURVIVES NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE

1. (U) ON MARCH 17, SLOVAK FINANCE MINISTER AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IVAN MIKLOS SURVIVED HIS SECOND NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE SINCE THE GOS' RE-ELECTION IN 2002. THE VOTE WAS 62-43, WITH 23 MPS ABSTAINING AMONG THOSE PRESENT IN THE 150-MEMBER HOUSE. MIKLOS' VICTORY WAS MORE A RESULT OF THE OPPOSITION'S INABILITY TO CLOSE RANKS THAN A DEMONSTRATION OF COALITION UNITY. THE HUNGARIAN COALITION PARTY (SMK) ABSTAINED FROM THE VOTE TO "DEMONSTRATE ITS DISAGREEMENT WITH SEVERAL MEASURES ORDERED BY MIKLOS" ONCE IT BECAME CLEAR THE OPPOSITION WAS SHORT OF VOTES TO RECALL MIKLOS. TWO DEPUTIES OF THE ALLIANCE OF NEW CITIZENS (ANO) FOLLOWED SUIT. ONLY HIS OWN PARTY SLOVAK DEMOCRATIC AND CHRISTIAN UNION (SDKU) AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (KDH) FULLY BACKED MIKLOS.

2. (U) MIKLOS, CONSIDERED THE MAIN ARCHITECT OF REFORMS THAT HAVE MADE SLOVAKIA SO ATTRACTIVE TO INVESTORS AND RESULTED IN THE FASTEST GROWING ECONOMY IN THE REGION, HAS BEEN CRITICIZED FOR IGNORING THE POOR AND UNEMPLOYED WHEN UNDERTAKING TOUGH POLICY MEASURES. THE COUNTRY FACED A WAVE OF SOCIAL UNREST AMONG THE ROMA MINORITY IN LATE FEBRUARY OVER CUTS IN SOCIAL BENEFITS. PM MIKULAS DZURINDA DEFENDED MIKLOS, SAYING SLOVAKIA WOULD NOT ATTRACT SO MANY FOREIGN INVESTORS WITHOUT THE MIKLOS-ORCHESTRATED CHANGES. HZDS LEADER VLADIMIR MECIAR INITIATED THE VOTE AGAINST MIKLOS, WITH SUPPORT FROM ROBERT FICO'S SMER PARTY AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

3. (SBU) THE KEY PLAYER WAS IVAN SIMKO WITH 7 MP'S IN HIS FREE FORUM PARTY. AFTER EARLY REPORTS THAT FF WOULD SUPPORT MECIAR'S RECALL MOTION, SIMKO ANNOUNCED THAT ALTHOUGH FF OBJECTED TO SEVERAL OF MIKLOS' ACTIONS, IT WOULD NOT SUPPORT ANY ATTEMPT TO SACK GOVERNMENT MEMBERS UNTIL AFTER THE APRIL 3 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND MAY 1 EU ACCESSION. SIMKO PREVIOUSLY TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT HE WOULD NOT SUPPORT A MIKLOS RECALL UNLESS MIKLOS MADE A MAJOR MISTAKE OR UNLESS OTHER ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION AGAINST HIM BY SMER WERE SUBSTANTIATED. SMER ALREADY ANNOUNCED IT WOULD SEEK A NEW NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE AGAINST MIKLOS SOON.

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